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SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; NSC FOR
ABRAMS/RAMCHAND/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/29/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: FAYYAD TELLS SENATOR SPECTER THAT GAZA AIR STRIKES
ARE DESTABILIZING TO WEST BANK, ARAB STATES

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad told Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA) on December 28 that Israeli Air Force strikes on Gaza are "highly destabilizing" for the West Bank and neighboring Arab countries, especially Jordan and Egypt. He said Hamas misread Israeli intentions and added that the operation improves DefMin Barak's political standing. End Summary.

Strikes "Highly Destabilizing" to West Bank, Jordan, Egypt

12. (C) PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad told CODEL Specter on December 28 that Israeli air strikes on Gaza are "highly destabilizing" for the West Bank and neighboring Arab countries, especially Jordan and Egypt. He said the preceding 48-hours had been "okay" in the West Bank, but noted there have been demonstrations across the West Bank against the Israeli strikes on Gaza. The PA is in a difficult situation, he said, as it "wants to allow people to express themselves, but not too much." He said the PA is taking steps to prevent violence and keep demonstrators away from Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank. He said he had been in touch with GOI interlocutors to encourage the IDF to avoid interacting with West Bank residents to prevent casualties that will further inflame the situation. He noted, however, that several Palestinians had been killed by the IDF in the West Bank during the day.

Hamas: "Miscalculated Israeli forbearance"

13. (C) Fayyad said "Hamas miscalculated Israeli forbearance," in the days and weeks leading up to the strikes, adding that they failed to account for the impact of Israeli elections on GOI DefMin Ehud Barak's calculus. Fayyad said that pressure from Arab states is key to influencing Hamas, and that the absence of significant Arab pressure emboldened the group in recent weeks. "Hamas thrives on international pressure, but feels weaker if they are attacked by regional powers like Saudi Arabia," he said.

Israel: Barak "stands to gain the most" politically

14. (C) Fayyad said that he believes Barak has improved his political standing as a result of the strikes. "Barak played it in a very smart way politically," he said. "He stands to gain the most if he's right, but lose the least because he has nothing to lose (if wrong)."

15. (SBU) CODEL Specter did not have an opportunity to review this cable.

WALLES